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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: NIGERIAN NUGGETS -- NOVEMBER 25, 2009

Classified By: Political Counselor James P. McAnulty
for reasons in Sections 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (U) Mission Nigeria provides the following compilation of recent political, economic, and social developments not previously reported.

NEARLY 1,000 NIGERIANS SEEK REFUGE FROM CAMEROON

12. (SBU) 910 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) now inhabit the Ekpri Ikang Resettlement Center in Cross River State, according to Dr. Theo Onyuku of the Cross River Youth Assembly. The IDPs involve mostly fishermen and their families, who sought refuge after Cameroonian gendarmes allegedly harrassed and attacked them in Bakassi, an area Nigeria ceded to Cameroon in August 2008. Onyuku claimed nine persons have died at the center during the last three weeks, allegedly due to injuries received at the hands of the Cameroonian gendarmes. According to unconfirmed Nigerian media reports, the IDPs claimed to suffer from torture and maiming, with many colleagues killed. Separately, Executive Director of the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) Victor Aquah confirmed that, as of November 20, 758 IDPs lived at the Ikang Resettlement Center. He admitted that authorities had to remove local residents living illegally at the center to make room for the IDPs. Aquah noted that housing and food remained inadequate for the large numbers of IDPs now residing there.

OPPOSITION MOVEMENTS AHEAD OF 2011

13. (C) During a November 20 discussion about Nigeria's political climate with PolCouns and PolOff, former Buhari National Campaign Secretary Buba Galadima argued that Nigeria did not need a system to register political parties. Rather, he said, every individual seeking public office should be able to register as a candidate six months before the election. He noted that, while current laws permitted anyone to form a political party -- and subsequently receive government funding -- independent candidates must pay deposits equal to ten percent of the anticipated election budget of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Such independent candidates risked losing their deposits if they failed to capture a certain percentage of

the votes. While he disagreed with many Electoral Reform Commission recommendations, he cited two as the most important to implement -- shifting the burden of proof to INEC on running credible elections and adjudicating challenges in the judicial system before allowing officials to assume office.

14. (C) Galadima asserted that the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) had destroyed the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) and divided Action Congress (AC) into two factions. He said the PDP continued to woo former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, hoping that he would return to the PDP fold. Galadima said President Yar'Adua had visited Atiku on four occasions since Atiku had met with former Head of State General Buhari to discuss how they can work together for the country's needs. Galadima claimed that, although Atiku and Buhari participated in discussions on the formation of a mega-party, Yoruba southerners actually drove the movement. Galadima also asserted that, while the Coalition of Democrats for Election Reforms (CODER) shared some interests with the mega-party, CODER leader and former Lagos Governor Bola Ahmed Tinubu did not want to lose the AC identity. Galadima accused Tinubu of plotting to fold CODER supporters into the AC. Galadima also urged the U.S. to move beyond cautioning the Nigerian Government (GON) about elections and adopt stronger measures, including threatening to impose sanctions on Nigeria and ban travel of corrupt leaders to the United States.

CAN PRESIDENT EXPRESSES DISMAY

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15. (C) The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) President Archbishop John Onaiyekan expressed pessimism to Poloff November 24 regarding the 2011 elections, which he did not think would represent an improvement over prior elections. He expressed dismay that, despite calls by church leaders for free and fair elections and good governance, they had little to show for their efforts. Onaiyekan criticized Nigerian political parties as lacking distinct philosophies and ideologies. Instead, he likened them to "gangs fighting over booty." He lamented that politicians used religion to rally constituencies. He said political and economic problems nearly always served as the root causes of conflicts frequently labeled as "religious" violence. Onaiyekan opined that Shari'a law should not exist in Nigeria, because the existence of two different legal systems caused "chaos" and did little to stem large-scale corruption.

LAGOS PRESENTS INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

16. (SBU) At the second Lagos Infrastructure Forum, organized November 18 by the Lagos State government and the Commonwealth Business Council, Governor Babatunde Fashola and several commissioners presented the Lagos Infrastructure Plan to foreign investors and the general public. Governor Fashola recently announced a 430 billion naira (\$2.9 billion) 2010 budget in which 60 percent would be devoted to infrastructure development. He remarked that the Public Private Partnership and the Public Procurement bills designed to "fast track" private investment in infrastructure development remained at second reading in the state assembly. Forum participants interacted with the commissioners and key state officials during roundtable sessions and tours of various project sites.

LAGOS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT SAFE

¶7. (SBU) U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) officials Edward Harahush and James Ingram met with the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) and the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) to follow up management of category one (CAT-1) status for the Lagos International Airport (LOS) during a November 15 to 17 visit. Harahush stated that everything "looked fine" to him. Likewise, Transportation Security Administration (TSA) representatives Rick Little and James Cardwell assessed Delta Airlines operations at LOS November 15 to 20. TSA assessed operations at LOS against 25 International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) security standards for airports. After a week of observations, record reviews, and interviews, the team concluded that LOS met ICAO standards. The team made four minor recommendations to help improve some security measures.

NIGERIA DEMOGRAPHIC AND HEALTH SURVEY LAUNCHED

¶8. (U) USAID, the GON, and other development partners announced the 2008 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) results November 23. The NDHS serves as Nigeria's (NDHS) results November 23. The NDHS serves as Nigeria's principal source of nationally representative and internationally comparative information on fertility and mortality, as well as other health services and outcomes, particularly for women and children under five years old. The NDHS tracks Nigeria's progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other health activities. The GON, through the National Population Commission, is responsible for carrying out the NDHS, while USAID provided the majority of funding. The NDHS found small gains compared to the last survey, conducted in 2003, in child health programs, including newborn care, immunization levels, treatment of childhood illnesses, malaria control, and nutritional interventions. However, Nigeria still has a long way to go to be considered a country with strong primary health care systems and low childhood mortality, and it is

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not on track to achieve the MDGs.

NORTHERN EDUCATION INITIATIVE

¶9. (U) USAID awarded a four-year, \$43.6-million contract to Creative Associates International, Incorporated, November 18 to implement the Northern Education Initiative (NEI) project in Sokoto and Bauchi States. NEI will build the capacity of state and local governments to deliver high-quality basic education and increase access to basic education and other services, such as counseling and health services referral and information. The project will focus its efforts on the well-being of orphans, girls, Muslim populations, and children in itinerant Islamic schools.

¶10. (U) Embassy Abuja and ConGen Lagos collaborated on this telegram.

SANDERS